

GUNLOCK RANCH

by Frank H. Spearman
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SYNOPSIS

Sleepy Cat, desert town of the Southwest, is celebrating the Fourth of July. Jane Van Tassel, beautiful daughter of Gus Van Tassel, hated owner of Gunlock ranch, has arrived from the East for the first time. She watches the Frontier Day celebration in company with Dr. Carpy, crusty, tender-hearted friend of the community. Henry Sawdy of the Circle Dot ranch, tricked in a fake horse race the day before by Dave McCrossen, foreman at Gunlock, plans revenge.

CHAPTER I—Continued

The noon train from Medicine Bend brought a few more visitors to the Fairgrounds. These made just about a load for Jim McAlpin's bus. To one Medicine Bend man, Jim paid particular deference, calling him frequently by his first name, but doing most of the talking himself all the way from the depot, for his friend, like most sporting men, was spare of words.

But the moment McAlpin's favored passenger had paid his fair, tipped the Scotch liverman generously, and walked toward the grandstand, McAlpin confided to those about him that this was the celebrated Harry Tension, big-time gambler from Medicine Bend, who talked of opening a place in Sleepy Cat.

Sawdy and Lefever were in moody confab behind the grandstand when the dapper Tension approached, picking his steps with disgust through the dust. Sawdy's eyes lighted on the new arrival first. He gave a great start.

"Harry!" he cried. "For the love o' women! Of all men you're sent this minute from heaven."

"How much is this goin' to cost, Henry?" asked Tension, pausing to dust his shoes with an immaculate silk handkerchief. Lefever, too, beamed on Tension.

"Harry!" he shouted. "For the love o' Mike, how come?"

"Two of you," commented Tension calmly. "The clouds are gatherin'. I supposed you've been cleaned by this Sleepy Cat bunch and want me for a pay-off."

"Harry," murmured Sawdy, lowered and very sober, "I'll admit I couldn't have said it better myself. Come this way. Talk low."

The three found a quiet spot back of the grandstand. The story of the cowmen was soon told. It went into sympathetic and unhesitating ears. As with all gamblers who play big, Tension's mind was soon made up. "I don't bank much on sure things; but you two seem to know what you're talkin' about. How much do you boys want?"

"A thousand, Harry."

Tension thought a minute. "Is Jake Spotts in town?"

"Here on the grounds, if he's not up at the saloon."

"Hunt him up. He'll have a few hundred. I've got a few in my pocket. Where's the boy that pulls this stuff for you?"

"Come over to the horses and meet Bill Denison. We're keeping him dark. They think he's a hostler."

Tension, when introduced, looked over Sawdy's hope in his usual cold-blooded fashion. Jake Spotts, the profane barber-shop-and-bar magnate, appeared meantime. Tension asked for six hundred dollars. Jake counted his roll. He showed four hundred odd.

"Give me the four, Jake," said Tension calmly.

"I c'n get all you want up at the bar, Harry," suggested Spotts, thin, tall, bald-headed, hollow-jawed, and hollow-eyed.

"There's no time to make the trip, Jake," interposed Sawdy, nervous. "The races are pretty near over, and the trick ridin' comes next."

"No matter," interposed Tension. "I'll borrow a couple hundred from Harry Boland."

"Why, Boland's backin' the Gunlock outfit."

"All the better. I'd just like to double-cross the . . ."

Within the next five minutes he was talking to Boland. "What's next on the program?" asked the Medicine Bend gambler after the preliminaries.

"Trick ridin'," said Boland.

"Chance to pick up any money on it?"

"Sure, if you can place any money. Bet on McCrossen, ridin' for Gunlock."

"The rustler?"

"Hell, he's foreman at Gunlock now."

"I suppose Van Tassel wouldn't feel easy if he had an honest man stealin' for him. All right. If you say it's McCrossen, lend me a couple of hundred, Harry. I'd like to make my fare up here, anyway."

Boland counted out two hundred dollars and handed it over. Tension handed half of it back to Boland. "Put this on McCrossen for me—I'll see if I can place the rest on him myself. Who's ridin' against him?"

"Two or three buckaroos. The Circle Dot outfit have entered a young fellow—we'll clean 'em, same as we did yesterday," predicted Boland.

"I heard about that—suckers will always fall for it, Harry. Well, I'll go over and talk to Sawdy and Lefever—see if they got any money left—maybe I can get a small bet."

Boland was fat and short. He never breathed easily; but he would not have been able to breathe at all if he had heard the next talk between Tension and Sawdy.

"How does it look to you, Harry?" blurted out Sawdy.

"Like many things have looked before takin'; they don't always look so good after. Here's Jake's four hundred. I'm addin' six hundred—that

makes your thousand. I don't know about that cigarette trick. I never saw it done but once."

"Where was that?"

"In Madison Square Garden."

"Who pulled it?"

"A young fellow—a Texan—I didn't get his name."

From the judges' stand came the clang of the bell. The jockeys rode up to hear the decision. When they had ridden away, the announcing judge called for the contestant in the next event—the fancy riding.

Four entries rode up and were checked in. First came McCrossen, Gunlock foreman, tall and spare, long-haired and straight as a statue, riding the identical mare that had taken the Circle Dot money the day before.

Next for entry came a Gunlock brave, accoutered with handed hair in scant Indian fashion. The third hope was a local boy in brave apparel.

The fourth to ride up was the night wrangler of the Circle Dot outfit—not an alarming threat either in looks or in reputation. He rode the horse on which he had been so badly beaten the day before. Lefever's little chestnut gelding. His personal rig was inconspicuous. Having been worn the whole way on the drive from the Rio Grande, wear and travel stain had made themselves sensibly felt on it.

Three judges had been chosen to name the victor—Jim Laramie, a north-country cattleman, himself a rider of no mean ability; John Selwood, a mining man who likewise knew how to



"I Suppose You've Been Cleaned by This Sleepy Cat Bunch."

ride; and an ex-sheriff, Bill Pardaloe—now a deputy—who rode like a tub, but matched any man in the mountains as a connoisseur of decent li-queur, and who would drink nowhere in Sleepy Cat except Jake Spotts'.

The first test came in Indian-style riding. This meant bareback first with bridle stripped; then with bridle. The Reservation entry was at home in this. It made a pretty picture: the half-naked young brave racing around the track, throwing himself from side to side and backward and forward on his pony.

Pardaloe gave him a hundred points and waited for the next man. The local boy passed out on this test. McCrossen made a splendid showing, but his size was against him for that style of horsemanship.

The wrangler, almost as large a man, seemed able better to twist and wind himself around his gelding. The last time he reared down the course it looked at a distance from the grandstand as if the horse had lost his rider, so completely did the wrangler hide himself on the opposite side.

The judges, at least, decided that no buck they had ever seen ride could hide himself more effectively from a foe—they gave the Texan par with the buck. McCrossen fell a few points under the two.

Wild West riding followed. In this McCrossen made a perfect score. His long, lithe body in action, his perfect ease and his striking garb brought enthusiastic applause. The wrangler, now well thought of, was a disappointment in this test. He got through all the work, but seemingly unevenly and with an effort. He dropped to eighty points, with McCrossen at par. Even the local boy and the Indian passed him.

"Looks like yesterday over again," said Harry Boland, disposed to jeer at Sawdy. "Guess your boy shot his bolt on the first round."

The laugh seemed to bore into Sawdy. "We don't quit yet," he blurted out like one baffled but not beaten, "though I'll say I have seen the boy ride a whole lot better."

"What do you think, Harry?" Boland was appealing now to Tension, who stood near at hand.

"Looks like the wrangler is through," assented Tension. Backing then to one side and speaking loud to Boland, he added: "Put that money of mine on McCrossen—he's got the act in the bag."

"Well, better luck next time, Henry," said Boland, resuming his prodding of Sawdy.

"I don't ask any better luck," retort-

ed Sawdy. "My boy is the best rider in this bunch, an' I know it."

"Henry," asked Boland, "have you got any money that says that?"

Sawdy fairly hated the sound of the fellow's sneering voice. "The boy's just havin' an off spell—might be all right next event."

"But you wouldn't bet on it?"

Sawdy looked at his tormentor gravely. "You want a bet, eh?"

"Sounds like it, don't it?"

"What odds'll you give?"

Boland turned to Tension to laugh. "Here's a man with the best fancy rider on earth and askin' odds on him."

"Askin' odds on him today only," explained Sawdy defensively. "He's just off color today."

Boland sneered again. "An' there ain't nothin' to be no trick ridin' tomorrow. That's a fine proposition of yours, Henry."

"I'll have my boy in the saddle tomorrow for any kind of ridin' you name against any rider you name," retorted Sawdy.

"What odds you askin', Sawdy?" asked Boland, dangerously near to a sneer as he questioned.

"On the showin' the boy's made," responded Sawdy impressively, "and only on the chance he can pull himself together by tomorrow, I'm askin' two to one."

"How much do you cover at that?"

"All you can raise."

"Sawdy," snapped Boland, "I'll go you a thousand, two to one." The judges' bell clanged for the trick ridin'. Sawdy in consternation rushed toward the stand. "Hold on," he cried, throwing up his hands. "Five minutes, gentlemen—just five minutes," he shouted. "My man is changin' his boots. Five minutes, please!"

"Does it take him five minutes to take off his boots?" bellowed Bill Pardaloe. "I c'n kick mine off in five seconds. Start the ridin'!" ordered Bill, clanging the bell impatiently.

"For God's sake, Bill Pardaloe!" shouted Sawdy, "hold on, hold on—give me at least three minutes." If a wink from the foot of a two-story balcony might be described as stentorian, such was the slow, agonizing wink that Sawdy cast up at the impatient judge.

Pardaloe looked at his watch. "I'll give you two minutes," he said sternly. "Be ready or default!" But both men quite understood that this remark was for public consumption rather than literal enforcement.

Sawdy raced hastily back to Boland, who, in fact, had followed him part way to the stand. "You said a thousand at two to one," panted Sawdy. He drew hastily from his pocket a roll of bills and laid the money in Tension's hands. "Count that—they're mostly fifties. Now, Boland, put up or shut up."

"Just a minute!" Boland conferred with his cronies—a group of them were already about him. There was a turning aside, a digging into pockets, an assembling of wads; the thousand was hurriedly put into Tension's hands.

Boland was excited, Sawdy particularly calm. "Boland," he said casually, "I'm hungry."

"What do you mean, Sawdy?"

"I'm hungry for another thousand, same odds."

"Like hell, I guess."

Sawdy pulled from another pocket a second roll of bills.

"Put up, Boland, or shut up, just's you like."

"Sawdy, I'll bet you five hundred more, even money." It was purely a bluff, but it brought an unpleasant surprise.

"I want to be fair, Harry Boland," retorted Sawdy, "just's you was, yesterday. Put up your five hundred, buddy. I'll cover it."

The words were a blow to Boland. Sawdy's not even pausing to insist on odds as the money went up told him that somebody, somewhere, had loaded something. Sawdy hustled back to the stand and winked anew at Pardaloe. The bell clanged. The contestants rode up. The wrangler now, as Jane Van Tassel saucily whispered to Dr. Carpy sitting next to her, was a symphony in brown, from head to foot—a skeleton brown jockey cap, close-fitting brown jersey, brown jersey riding trousers, and low, soft, brown boots made up his rig.

McCrossen clung to his scarlet sash and silk shirt—nor had the Indian or the local boy changed.

As the riding went swiftly forward and the feats grew more difficult, the boy and the Indian were eliminated.

McCrossen took these stunts readily, in all the tests after him. These two riders seemed indifferent in all the earlier feats. They rode standing, feet first or head first; twirling rifles, turning lightning-like in the saddle to face forward or backward at full speed. The crowd sat bewildered.

With the struggle narrowed to the two seemingly even-matched riders, spectators began to wonder how the contest could be decided. The judges, after conference, asked for a further trial of the familiar feat of picking objects from the ground.

Already these feats had been made a feature and creditably performed. But some word had reached the judges that there might be further possibilities in this field. The two contestants were asked to propose their own stunts, tossing for first choice. McCrossen won. A lady's white handkerchief was dropped, and, riding at speed, turned backward in the saddle, McCrossen picked it from the ground. The wrangler followed suit, with easy result.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL Lesson

By REV. HAROLD L. LUNDQUIST, Dean of the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago. © Western Newspaper Union.

Lesson for August 9

SAUL CONVERTED AND COMMISSIONED

LESSON TEXT—Acts 9:1-9, 17-19; I Timothy 1:12-14.

GOLDEN TEXT—I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.—Acts 26:19.

PRIMARY TOPIC—Saul Becomes Jesus' Friend.

JUNIOR TOPIC—On the Road to Damascus.

INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC—Appointed for Service.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC—After Conversion, What?

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus is one of the outstanding events of Bible history. It presents one of the strongest evidences of the truth of the Christian faith, for only on the ground of regeneration can we account for the change in Saul's life, and only on the assurance that he met the Living and Risen Christ can we account for his conversion. As our lesson opens we find the brilliant, zealous, young Jew, Saul, as:

I. A Bold Persecuter (9:1-2).

He was "yet breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." The death of the godly Stephen had only increased his determination to wipe out those who were "of this way"—the followers of the One who is "the way." But as he carries letters from the high priest to Damascus which would authorize him to imprison them, he meets the Christ whom he persecutes and he becomes

II. A Convicted Sinner (vv. 3-9).

Stricken down by a brilliant heavenly light, he finds himself talking to the Lord Jesus. He hears from his holy lips the solemn indictment of those who persecute God's people—"Why persecutest thou me?" He who lays unkind hands, or untrue accusation upon God's children had best beware, for so closely is our Lord identified with his people that when they suffer, it is he who bears the hurt.

In a single sentence the Lord disposes of the persecuting zeal and the sinful skepticism of this proud young Pharisee, and Saul enters into Damascus not as the haughty persecuter, but as a man trembling and astonished at his own sin. He spends three days shut in with his own soul and God, not seeing, not caring to eat, losing all consciousness of earth, but entering into communion with God. By God's grace the old life is pulled up by the roots as it is displaced by the new life in Christ Jesus. And now God is ready to send his servant Ananias to address Paul as

III. A Converted Brother (vv. 17-19).

The fears of Ananias that Saul might still be a worker of evil (v. 13) are soon overcome by God's assurance that in the praying Saul he had prepared for himself "a chosen vessel" (v. 15) to bear the gospel to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the children of Israel. Let us not fail to note carefully that the greatest of all Christian leaders, the apostle Paul, was led out into his life of loyalty and service to Christ by a humble layman. Repeatedly God's Word by precept and example stresses the vital importance of personal work on the part of lay men and women. The leaders of Christian work during the coming generation are now in the Sunday School classes of our churches, perhaps in a little wayside chapel in the country, in the village church, in the mission or settlement house.

Saul knew nothing of that subtle hypocrisy known as being "a secret believer," for at once he made open confession of his faith in baptism, and "Straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues that he is the Son of God" (v. 20). He became indeed

IV. A Mighty Preacher (I Tim. 1:12-14).

In this passage Paul is writing to his son in the faith, Timothy, about thirty-four years after his conversion. As he looks back over the years he forgets the trials and sorrows, the beating with rods, the shipwrecks, the bitter disappointment over false brethren (Read II Cor. 11:23-28). He remembers only the matchless grace of God that showed mercy toward a blasphemer and persecuter, and counted him faithful, appointing him with "his service."

Paul summarizes that which we know to have been the great life of the world's mightiest preacher by attributing it all in true humility to "the grace of our Lord" which "abounded exceedingly with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." For to him "to live was Christ" (Phil. 1:21).

Follow Your Bent

Whatever you are by nature, keep to it; never desert your own line of talent. Be what nature intended you for, and you will succeed; be anything else and you will be ten thousand times worse than nothing.—Sydney Smith.

Great and Small Acts

The one who will be found in trial capable of great acts of love is ever the one who is always doing considerate small ones.—F. W. Robertson.

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Foreign Words and Phrases

- A bas le traître. (F.) Down with the traitor.
- Aurea mediocritas. (L.) The golden mean.
- Bas bleu. (F.) A bluestocking.
- Beaux yeux de sa cassette. (F.) Her money is her attraction.
- Cher ami (masc.) Chere amie (fem.) (F.) Dear friend.
- Dramatis personae. (L.) The characters of a play.
- Douceur. (F.) Sweetness; a bribe; a fee.
- E pluribus unum. (L.) Out of many, one. (Motto of the United States.)
- Faire bonne mine. (F.) to put a good face on a thing.
- L'homme propose, et Dieu dispose. (F.) Man proposes, and God disposes.
- Galant'uomo. (It.) A man of honor; a gentleman.

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